



County of Fairfax, Virginia

To protect and enrich the quality of life for the people, neighborhoods and diverse communities of Fairfax County

Hunter Mill District – Citizen Budget Committee 2015 Report

The Committee continues to appreciate the challenge of managing a complex enterprise such as Fairfax County. Balancing the need to maintain a quality environment where all residents can work, learn, and play together with the circumstance of constrained fiscal resources over the last several budget cycles has been challenging. We applaud the Board of Supervisors for managing this effort with restraint and an eye to the future. In particular, the budget practice of looking at two years concurrently has introduced fiscal discipline and a forward focus that reinforce the practice of living within our means. Given the great recession and its effects are not yet relics for the history books, the cautious optimism evident for the expected near-term recovery must still be tempered with the principle of sustainability.

While this Committee has previously focused our report on County revenues and expenditures, this year we looked at the management priorities as envisioned by the Board of Supervisors, and their effects on the 2015 budget. The Board's vision to embrace these priorities seeks to **engage residents and businesses** in the process of addressing these challenging times, **protect investment** in our **most critical priorities**, and **maintain strong responsible fiscal stewardship**. The Committee discussion summaries that follow reflect these priorities.

A Quality Educational System

Last year this Committee applauded the enhanced collaboration between the Board of Supervisors and the Fairfax County School Board. Again we fully support this effort and recommend enhancing these joint planning and budgeting activities. For example given the impending dramatic changes to bus transportation expected with the opening of the Silver Line, it may be possible to leverage the FCPS and County bus support services. Equipping FastTran buses with seat belts so they qualify as school buses under the Virginia Department of Education guidelines may also prove to be an effective cost saving. The Committee recommends a joint study review these transit opportunities.

The Committee strongly supports continuing the work of the joint School Board / County Infrastructure Financing Committee and encourages them to focus on plans to continue progress implementing their recommendations to further improve current capital planning processes. Areas to emphasize should include allocating appropriate and timely capital in the budget for developing area schools, reducing school capital project costs, and evaluating the feasibility of merging of the FCPS and County facility management divisions into a single entity to reduce the cost.

The Committee is concerned FCPS will have to pay an additional \$37 million into the Virginia Retirement System in 2015, an amount expected to increase substantially in future budget years. Beginning in 2015, both FCPS and the County should identify funding sources within their control to offset these rising costs.

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